United Nations E/CN.6/2013/6

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
18 December 2012

Original: English

Commission on the Status of Women
Fifty-seventh session
4-15 March 2013
Item 3 (c) of the provisional agenda*
Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century": gender mainstreaming, situations and programmatic matters

Situation of and assistance to Palestinian women

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report, submitted in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 2012/25, highlights the situation of Palestinian women between 1 October 2011 and 30 September 2012 and provides an overview of the assistance provided by entities of the United Nations system with regard to education and training; health; economic empowerment and livelihoods; rule of law and violence against women; power and decision-making; and institutional development. The report concludes with recommendations for consideration by the Commission on the Status of Women.

* E/CN.6/2013/1.

12-65575 (E) 150113

Please recycle

I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 2012/25 on the situation of and assistance to Palestinian women, the Economic and Social Council expressed deep concern about the grave situation of Palestinian women in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem. The Council requested the Secretary-General to continue to review the situation, to assist Palestinian women by all available means, including those laid out by the Secretary-General in his previous report on the situation of and assistance to Palestinian women (E/CN.6/2012/6) and to submit to the Commission on the Status of Women at its fifty-seventh session a report, including information provided by the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), on the progress made in the implementation of the resolution.

2. The present report covers the period from 1 October 2011 to 30 September 2012 and reviews the situation of Palestinian women based on information from United Nations entities and individual experts that monitor the situation of Palestinians in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

3. Unless indicated otherwise, the report is based on contributions and information submitted by entities of the United Nations system that provide assistance to Palestinian women, including ESCWA, the United Nations country team for the Occupied Palestinian Territory and the Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process. The United Nations country team has coordinated the contributions to the report of the following United Nations entities: the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the International Labour Organization (ILO), the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the United Nations Development Programme/Programme of Assistance to the Palestinian People (UNDP/PAPP), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS), the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS), the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), the Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process (UNSCO), the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), the World Food Programme (WFP) and the World Health Organization (WHO).

II. Situation of Palestinian women

4. During the reporting period, the political, social and economic conditions on the ground remained challenging. While these conditions have an impact on all Palestinians, women and girls experience them differently because of gender-based inequalities and discrimination. Despite efforts by the United Nations, the Quartet and individual Member States to provide facilitation and some initial diplomatic progress in early 2012, peace negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians remained at an impasse, with confidence in the political process eroding. The continuation of the political and geographical divide between the Gaza Strip and the

West Bank and limited progress in reconciliation, ongoing Israeli occupation of the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and closure of the Gaza Strip, continued to give rise to a difficult social and economic situation for Palestinians in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. At the same time, the Palestinians' State-building programme progressed further, increasing both the depth and the breadth of institutional readiness for Statehood. The sustainability of these achievements, however, whether in the economic or the security fields, is at increased risk. The growing tension and escalation in violence are of grave concern. The United Nations and Quartet partners have, as outlined in recent reports by the Secretary-General, continuously urged both sides to avoid provocations which would be detrimental to the prospects of peace (see A/67/84-E/2012/68 and A/67/364-S/2012/701).

5. Palestinians in the Occupied Palestinian Territory continue to face serious obstacles to freedom of movement and access. Inadequate zoning and planning on the part of Israeli authorities, residency policies and practices,[1] expropriations of buildings and allocation of land, the barrier, checkpoints, the permit and access regime, and bureaucratic constraints constitute a multifaceted system which impeded movement into the Gaza Strip, between the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, within the West Bank, and into East Jerusalem from the remainder of the Occupied Palestinian Territory. The barrier and the restrictions have a gender-specific impact and continue to pres .t particular risks for expectant mothers, such as lack of access to specialized maternal care for high-risk births. The restrictions have a significant impact on overall economic development and on the capacity of local and international organizations to provide humanitarian and other assistance.[2]

6. Continued settlement activity has resulted in the forced eviction and displacement of Palestinians, causing direct physical insecurity, disruption of livelihoods and basic services, a decreased standard of living and increasing dependence on humanitarian aid. As outlined in recent reports by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the impact on women's and families' psychosocial well-being can be devastating.[3]

7. Tensions, violent incidents and attacks linked to the conflict and the occupation continued throughout the reporting period, resulting in civilian deaths and injury. There was a reported increase in settler-related violence in the West Bank. Israel faced increased indiscriminate firing of rockets, mortars and other munitions from Gaza, which spiked during several dangerous rounds of escalation. Gazans suffered from militant activity as well as operations of the Israeli Defence Forces (IDF), which conducted an increased number of air strikes (see A/67/84-E/2012/68 and E/67/364-S/2012/701). According to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs,[4] in the West Bank 5 Palestinian civilians (4 men and 1 boy) were killed and 2,372 injured (including 1,986 men, 75 women, 288 boys and

[1] United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs occupied Palestinian territory, "The humanitarian impact of the Barrier", fact sheet (July 2012).

[2] United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs occupied Palestinian territory, "Fragmented lives: humanitarian overview 2011" (May 2012).

[3] See, for example, United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs occupied Palestinian territory, "Demolitions and forced displacement in the Occupied West Bank" (January 2012); and "Settlements in Palestinian residential areas in East Jerusalem" (April 2012).

[4] Figures cover the period from 1 October 2011 to 30 September 2012; data collected by the United Nations.

16 girls) by IDF, while 112 men, 21 women and 40 children were injured by settlers. Forty Israeli settlers (36 men, 1 woman, 2 boys and 1 girl) were injured by Palestinians. In the Gaza Strip, 11 Palestinian civilians (7 men, 1 woman and 3 boys) were killed and 153 injured (including 84 men, 25 women, 33 boys and 3 girls) during Israeli air strikes. Twelve Israeli civilians (11 men and 1 woman) were injured by Palestinian rockets launched into southern Israel. According to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, available information indicates that violent acts by members of IDF or by settlers are rarely subject to independent or impartial investigations and that violations are often perpetrated with impunity.

8. Women in both the West Bank and the Gaza Strip remained vulnerable to arbitrary restrictions on their right to freedom of expression and assembly. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights reports that women continued to be exposed to violence and danger during peaceful demonstrations, where, on separate occasions, both Israeli and Palestinian Authority security forces (in the West Bank), as well as the de facto authorities (in the Gaza Strip), used excessive force in policing the demonstrations.

9. As of 31 August 2012, 6 women were held in Israeli prisons outside of the Occupied Palestinian Territory in contravention of international law, representing a decrease, from 29 women, during the previous reporting period. However, reports indicate that Palestinian women continue to live in poor conditions in these prisons and face reintegration problems upon release owing to lack of social support.[5]

10. The reporting period saw an increase in gross domestic product (GDP) figures, lower inflation and better employment indicators. Yet, poverty and unemployment rates remained high, particularly in the Gaza Strip. The poverty level was 25.8 per cent in 2011, ranging from 17.8 per cent in the West Bank to 38.8 per cent in Gaza.[6] Palestinian women living in refugee camps tend to be the most vulnerable to poverty.[7] A report recently released by the United Nations country team concluded that the continued restrictions on imports to and exports from the Gaza Strip substantially impacted the prospects for economic development and growth.[8] An estimated 80 per cent of the population was dependent on humanitarian assistance.[9]

11. Some 1.3 million Palestinians were living in food insecurity in 2011. In a joint assessment on socioeconomic and food security in the West Bank and Gaza Strip carried out by FAO, UNRWA, WFP and the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics,[10] the food insecurity levels among female-headed households in the West

[5] Contribution to the present report of the United Nations country team in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

[6] Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, "Levels of living and poverty in the Palestinian territory, 2011".

[7] Contribution of ESCWA to the present report.

[8] United Nations country team, "Gaza in 2020: a liveable place?" (Jerusalem, Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process (UNSCO), August 2012).

[9] United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs occupied Palestinian territory, "Five years of blockade: the humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip", fact sheet (June 2012).

[10] FAO, UNRWA, WFP and Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, "Socio-economic and food security survey: West Bank and Gaza Strip, occupied Palestinian territory — 2011" (May 2012). Available from www.wfp.org/content/occupied-palestinian-territory-socio-economic-and-food-security-survey-may-2012 (accessed November 2012).

Bank were found to be 7 per cent higher than among male-headed households. In Gaza, 44 per cent of all households were food-insecure, compared with 17 per cent in the West Bank. Food insecurity levels among female-headed households in area C of the West Bank had reached 39 per cent.[11]

12. Available data show that women's unemployment rates during the second quarter of 2012 remained high, at 47.2 per cent in the Gaza Strip and 21.4 per cent in the West Bank. Women's participation rates in the labour force stood only at 14.9 per cent (compared with 65.9 per cent for males) in Gaza and at 18.6 per cent (compared with 71.5 per cent for males) in the West Bank. The majority of formally employed Palestinian women worked in part-time positions, in fields such as education and teaching, clerical work and services. Refugee women are more affected by unemployment than non-refugee women in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.[12] Real public sector wages showed significant disparities between men and women, the average daily wages earned by women amounting to only 84 per cent of those earned by men in 2011.[13] The absence of a social security law has resulted in discrimination against women and workers with family responsibilities.[14] According to an ILO gender legal review, Palestinian society still perceives women's presence in the labour market as a threat to men's work opportunities, and as being more expensive to the employer than the presence of men, because of the perceived high costs of their employment owing to marital status and maternity leave.[15]

13. Women's health continued to be an area of concern, with women in vulnerable communities having limited access to essential health care. Restrictions on movement and on access continued to impede access to health care, more particularly for women in area C,[16] in the seam zone[17] and in the Gaza Strip. In the West Bank, according to the consolidated appeals process 2012, about 186 communities (approximately 151,000 women and girls) had limited access to essential health care, while 249 communities (279,000 women and girls) had no adequate access to emergency care. Micronutrient deficiencies remain a concern, with high levels of anaemia, as well as vitamin A and D deficiencies, recorded for girls, boys and pregnant women. Anaemia levels were at 57 per cent among children 9 to 12 months of age, and 26.8 per cent among pregnant women. An estimated 45 per cent of pregnant women in the Gaza Strip suffered from anaemia. Other prevalent disorders during pregnancy included hypertension, diabetes and

[11] Contribution to the present report of the United Nations country team in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

[12] Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, "Labour force survey: second quarter" (2012).

[13] Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, "Performance of the Palestinian Economy, 2011".

[14] ILO, "Review of labour laws to promote women's labour force participation: a legal analysis and recommendations for promoting gender equality" (Geneva, 2011).

[15] ILO, MDG Achievement Fund, "Mainstreaming gender equality concerns in Palestinian cooperatives", policy brief No. 10.

[16] Area C is the portion of the West Bank under full Israeli civil and security control and covers over 60 per cent of the West Bank.

[17] The "seam zone" is the closed area between the Green Line and the separation barrier in which about 11,000 Palestinians currently reside. See United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs occupied Palestinian territory, "West Bank movement and access update" (September 2012).

psychological problems.[18] Estimates of maternal mortality have varied widely in the absence of a well-structured national monitoring system. In 2011, the Ministry of Health estimated that the maternal mortality rate was 29.9 per cent in the Gaza Strip and 26.3 per cent in the West Bank, and fertility rates were 4.9 for the Gaza Strip and 3.8 for the West Bank.[19] The main cause of morbidity among Palestinians is chronic non-communicable disorders, while diabetes had an incidence rate of 154.4 per 100,000 in the West Bank in 2011. Ministry of Health statistics for the West Bank show that breast cancer was the most common malignant disease for women (11.8 per cent).[20]

14. The situation in relation to water and sanitation remains critical, especially in Gaza, where 90 per cent of water from the aquifer is not safe for drinking without treatment. Availability of clean water is thus limited, with average consumption of 70-90 litres a day, below the global WHO standard of 100 litres per day.[21] According to UNICEF, about 83 per cent of the population in the Gaza Strip is dependent upon private water vendors for their supplies of drinking water. This water risks being polluted by the time it reaches the consumer, owing to an absence of regulation, and puts a financial strain on the most vulnerable families. In the West Bank, lack of adequate water has placed over 50,000 people in 151 communities in a vulnerable position. Eleven out of the 19 refugee camps in the West Bank have official sewerage networks that are connected to municipal main sewerage systems. The lack of sewerage systems in the remaining camps has affected Palestinian refugees negatively, and is linked with issues such as clean water and underground water contamination as well as water-borne diseases. As a result of the lack of safe drinking water and sanitation services, the health of women and children in particular is being adversely affected. In addition, water shortages and sanitation problems cause particularly acute problems for women, insofar as managing with low water supplies imposes heavier domestic work burdens and confronting a higher incidence of water-borne diseases among family members entails heavier care responsibilities; moreover, these problems produce additional strains on household income. UNICEF reports that inadequacies in water and sanitation facilities in schools have led to poor hygiene among children in a large number of government schools. Lack of adequate and separate toilets for boys and girls (in mixed schools) has affected learning achievements.[22]

15. Education indicators for enrolment showed significant progress. The net enrolment rate for basic education is 92 per cent, with more girls enrolled (95 per cent) than boys (90 per cent).[23] Female students constitute about 50.2 per cent of children enrolled, increasing from 49.4 per cent in basic education to 54.1 per cent in secondary education and to 57 per cent in higher education.[24] In the Gaza Strip, over 450,000 children, half of them girls, were attending schools during the 2010/11

[18] Contribution to the present report of the United Nations country team in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

[19] Ministry of Health, "Annual report" (2011).

[20] Contribution to the present report of the United Nations country team in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

[21] "Gaza in 2020: a liveable place?".

[22] Contribution to the present report of the United Nations country team in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

[23] Ministry of Education, "Annual report" (2011).

[24] Ibid.

academic year.[25] Still, the education system is characterized by inequitable access and an overall decline in the quality of education. Access to basic education is affected by high school fees and the significant costs of transportation throughout the Occupied Palestinian Territory, with many families in East Jerusalem having to send their children to private schools owing to limited space in public schools. In the West Bank, threat of harassment by Israeli settlers and Israeli security forces on the way to school, and fear of harm and humiliation at checkpoints, create stress and fear among children and their families.[26] According to UNICEF, in the Gaza Strip, over 5,000 girls began the 2011/12 school year attending classes in tents, caravans or tin shacks with minimal protection from the heat. The fuel shortage in the Gaza Strip, which intensified in February 2012, resulted in scheduled blackouts for 6-18 hours per day and random unscheduled cuts,[27] and has had an impact on the functioning of schools. With regard to the Gaza Strip, literacy rates were positive, with a 96 per cent literacy rate according to official figures (93 per cent for women and 98 per cent for men).[28] As noted during the last reporting period, advances in the educational levels of girls at secondary school and university levels are yet to be translated into gains in the labour market: women's unemployment rates remain significantly higher than men's among women with 13 or more years of education.[29]

16. While women have continued to participate in a range of roles in political life and hold various positions within the Palestinian political system and institutions, they remain underrepresented in decision-making bodies. Women constitute 21 per cent of the total number of current ministers (five ministers) and 6.3 per cent of deputy ministers. As of 2010, women constituted 13.2 per cent of the Palestinian Legislative Council and 18 per cent of local councils.[30] These results were linked to the implementation of a quota system in the Palestinian Legislative Council and local councils. In the justice sector, women account for 11 per cent of all judges, 5 per cent of prosecutors and 15 per cent of all lawyers.[31] There is one female governor for the West Bank (Ramallah). The Palestinian Authority employs about 88,500 staff, of whom 41.1 per cent are women, with 36.5 per cent of ministry staff being women. However, women tend to remain at the lower levels of decision-making.[32] According to UNRWA, in refugee camps, women also tend to be underrepresented at the level of camp governance. Women's organizations and coalitions continued to raise awareness and advocate on women's rights, on gender equality and on combating violence against women. However, movement restrictions and the divide between the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, continue to contribute to difficulties in coordinating between the different groups.[33]

---

[25] "Gaza in 2020: a liveable place?".

[26] UNICEF, "My right to education", fact sheet (September 2012).

[27] United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs occupied Palestinian territory, "The humanitarian impact of Gaza's electricity and fuel crisis" (March 2012).

[28] "Gaza in 2020, a liveable place?".

[29] Contribution of ESCWA to the present report.

[30] Contribution to the present report of the United Nations country team in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

[31] Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, "Women and Men in Palestine: issues and statistics, 2010" (2010).

[32] Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, "Women and Men in Palestine: issues and statistics, 2011" (December 2011).

[33] Contribution to the present report of the United Nations country team in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

17. The Occupied Palestinian Territory continues to be characterized by differing legal frameworks and a weak rule of law. The existing legal frameworks in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip contain laws that are outdated and discriminate against women, particularly in matters of divorce, custody of children, inheritance and violence against women. Little progress in legal reform was observed during the reporting period, as the Palestinian Legislative Council has not been convened since 2007. A UNDP study in the West Bank shows that women face significant challenges to accessing justice, including a lack of legal literacy, a lack of legal assistance, and the insensitivity of justice and security institutions to their needs.[34]

18. A 2011 Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics survey throughout the West Bank and the Gaza Strip found that approximately 37 per cent of married Palestinian women had experienced physical or sexual violence by their husbands in the past 12 months.[35] Of these, 58.6 per cent reported experiencing psychological violence, 55.1 per cent economic deprivation, 54.8 per cent forced social isolation, 23.5 per cent physical violence and 11.8 per cent sexual violence.[36] In response to this violence, 30.2 per cent sought refuge with family, while 65.3 per cent kept silent. Only 0.7 per cent of those women who had experienced violence sought refuge in shelters. With regard to children, 51 per cent of those surveyed reported having been exposed to violence inside the household by at least one member of the household. Of these, 69 per cent were exposed to psychological violence by their parents and 34.4 per cent to physical violence. According to police family protection unit annual records, the units had received more than 2,500 reports of family violence and handled a total of 1,755 complaints in 2011.[37]

19. The informal justice system continues to deal with matters traditionally considered private issues, even those that are considered crimes by the Penal Code, such as, inter alia, femicide, so-called honour crimes and violence against women and children. According to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, partner non-governmental organizations documented four cases of honour killings in the Gaza Strip during the reporting period, and eight cases in the West Bank since 1 January 2012. In 2011, the President signed a presidential decree that amended articles of the Penal Code by removing provisions for leniency with regard to murder in the name of so-called family honour. The presidential decree has still not been published in the official gazette and is therefore not effective.[38]

20. During the reporting period, the Palestinian Authority and civil society partners undertook a number of steps additional to those reported in the last reporting period to address violence against women. Following a rise in reported violent attacks against women in the West Bank, the Palestinian Authority announced the formation of a committee to study personal status laws to protect women. Police family protection units mandated to deal with cases of domestic

[34] UNDP, "Public perceptions of Palestinian justice and security institutions" (December 2011).

[35] Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, "Violence survey in Palestinian communities" (December 2011).

[36] The survey sampled 5,811 households in the Occupied Palestinian Territory in 2011.

[37] UN-Women, "Policing for women's security and justice in the occupied Palestinian territory: A comprehensive background analysis, and recommendations for strengthening the Palestinian Civil Police and Family Protection Unit"(forthcoming in 2012).

[38] Contribution to the present report of the United Nations country team in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

violence in the West Bank were further strengthened, and an additional unit was inaugurated in Jericho, bringing the total number in operation to eight.[39]

III. Assistance to Palestinian women

21. The present section provides information on efforts made by the United Nations system, in cooperation with the Palestinian Authority, donors and civil society, to address the specific needs and priorities of women and girls. It contains updates on assistance provided in the following areas: education and training, health, economic empowerment and livelihoods, rule of law and violence against women, power and decision-making and institutional development. Many initiatives were implemented through the United Nations Joint Programme on Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women and the Joint Programme on Culture and Development, funded by the Millennium Development Goals Achievement Fund (MDG-F). The first seeks specifically to promote Palestinian women's social, economic and political empowerment and reduce gender-based violence by encouraging their political voice, increasing their opportunities to obtain decent and productive work, and improving their access to protection and justice.

A. Education and training

22. United Nations organizations continued to implement a range of initiatives to promote women's and girls' access to education and training. In the 2011/12 academic year, 30,657 girls were enrolled in elementary and preparatory education in UNRWA schools in the West Bank (58.2 per cent of students), and 104,983 girls in the Gaza Strip (48.2 per cent of students). In the West Bank, 48 female students benefited from UNRWA administered scholarships for universities and 1,074 female students benefited from technical and vocational training (22 technical specializations and 4 trade specializations), as well as career counselling. An estimated 64 per cent of the 2011 female student graduates (out of a total of 376) from UNRWA vocational training centres found work within one year. In the West Bank, ILO partnered with the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) and UNRWA in developing the technical and vocational training (TVET) module "Women gain employment skills in photography". Trained in entrepreneurial and technical skills, 17 women from the photography course graduated successfully. In the Gaza Strip, ILO, in partnership with the Islamic University of Gaza, initiated a project for skills development of women engineers in the construction sector in Gaza. This project was based on the "Construction skills deficit in Gaza" assessment which identified a gap between demand and supply, in addition to the fact that most women engineers in the construction sector were unemployed owing to social acceptance-related factors. Thirty-six women engineers successfully graduated and completed the on-the-job training placements. The Palestinian contractors union offered 10 women engineers a full-time paid job after the completion of the programme. The FAO "Junior farmer field and life schools project", implemented in 22 schools in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, provided training to 330 girls and 22 teachers in vocational agricultural skills.

[39] Contribution to the present report of the United Nations country team in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

23. UNICEF supported the rehabilitation of 23 schools, including the construction of 10 new classrooms. During the reporting period, more than 40,000 children (50 per cent of them girls) received learning materials, and protective access to learning was improved for 5,400 children (2,700 girls), including through provision of school vehicles. Opportunities for safe play and learning benefited 550 students (50 per cent of them girls) in East Jerusalem and 3,500 children (1,700 of them girls) in the Gaza Strip. After-school activities in adolescent-friendly services centres reached 6,514 adolescents (3,252 girls) in 56 such centres (15 in the Gaza Strip and 41 in the West Bank, including 10 in East Jerusalem), with active learning, recreational activities and life skills-based education, creative thinking, active research, social initiatives, forum theatre skills and peers education support. To promote access to quality education for all Palestinian children, nine United Nations organizations supported the Ministry of Education in developing an education package designed to improve capacities on early childhood development and promote inclusive and child-friendly education. Activities linked to the package have been piloted in 46 schools (32 in the West Bank and 14 in the Gaza Strip).

B. Health

24. United Nations entities continued to implement a range of initiatives to facilitate access to health care for women living in isolated and marginalized communities. Through six mobile health clinics, UNRWA provided outreach of primary preventive and curative health care to 58 communities that lack health services and have access difficulties, and where many women and children face a threat of violence or harassment because of the current security situation. In addition, UNRWA health centres in the West Bank treated over 20,000 female patients for diabetes and/or hypertension. UNFPA rehabilitated and equipped 6 maternity hospitals and 14 primary health-care centres in the Gaza Strip, carried out capacity development efforts targeting health-care providers in primary and secondary health-care settings, and conducted outreach to 40 isolated communities in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, helping them to access key reproductive health services in isolated areas affected by the separation barrier, settlements and checkpoints. To improve access of women in vulnerable communities to an essential package of health services, UNICEF procured small-scale medical equipment for the functioning of mobile clinics in area C; supported essential-care outreach services to 28 Bedouin communities in the Jordan Valley; and procured essential drugs in the Gaza Strip.

25. UNRWA, UNFPA, UNICEF and WHO continued to provide a range of services targeting maternal and child health. From September 2011 to July 2012, the UNRWA West Bank Health Department provided antenatal care to 12,699 women, postnatal care to 10,065 women and family planning services to about 24,611 clients in the West Bank. Some 15,970 women were also referred to hospitals and assisted with hospitalization. A total of 1,570 women were newly enrolled in pre-conception care and 320 men were involved in accompanying their wives to pre-conception care counselling and for family planning in the West Bank. In the Gaza Strip, during the reporting period, there were 10,332 new acceptors of family planning and 6,027 women who were accessing pre-conception care at UNRWA clinics. In the Gaza Strip, the number of pregnant women under antenatal care was 32,181, with 94 per cent participating in four or more antenatal care visits. Postnatal care was

provided to 36,330 women (100 per cent for all deliveries during the reporting period). UNFPA contributed to the development and implementation of behaviour-change communication campaigns and activities within Palestinian communities addressing reproductive health issues. As part of the humanitarian response in the Gaza Strip, practitioners from primary health-care centres were trained on providing safe delivery within the clinic or at the community level. UNICEF also trained 15 midwives on providing care to mothers and newborns. A total of 912 mothers and their newborns were visited at least once from January to May 2012 with 2.0 per cent of newborns and 2.2 per cent of mothers referred to health centres for additional examinations and care. UNICEF procured micronutrient supplements for the benefit of about 210,000 children and 110,000 women. UNICEF continued to support the implementation of the Baby-friendly Hospital Initiative in nine hospitals (six in the West Bank and three in the Gaza Strip). UNICEF support to World Breastfeeding Week celebrations involved working closely with religious counsellors to enhance advocacy initiatives for young mothers. In addition, the community component of the programme targeted all mothers of childbearing age in the Gaza Strip. The programme upgraded skills of midwives and gynaecologists (more than 50 were sent for training in East Jerusalem), improved health information and supervision systems in maternity units and promoted safe childbirth practices in Gaza communities through health workers and women's organizations.

26. United Nations entities also continued to provide a range of psychosocial services. UNICEF provided direct psychosocial support to 12,512 children (at least 6,000 girls) and about 11,000 caregivers (91 per cent of them female) in the Gaza Strip. UNICEF support to the child protection networks continued with three additional networks established in the West Bank. In the Gaza Strip, 14 girls and 11 boys were referred by child protection networks for specialized services and case management; in the West Bank, 98 girls and 62 boys were referred. Psychosocial counselling was offered in 21 UNRWA health centres and 15 relief and social services offices across the Gaza Strip. During the reporting period, 6,407 women accessed counselling services, the majority in UNRWA health centres.

27. During the reporting period, UNICEF supported a range of initiatives with regard to water, sanitation and hygiene. This included the extension of water networks in underserved communities in the south West Bank, benefiting 300 families, and the installation of household water filters, allowing 300 vulnerable families in the Gaza Strip to access adequate water for drinking and domestic purposes. UNICEF is also working on improving household-level water storage capacity and safe sanitation facilities in area C of the West Bank and in the buffer zone[40] of the Gaza Strip. To minimize groundwater pollution and sewage flooding in Rafah, UNICEF supported wastewater network improvement, benefiting 1,161 women and girls with adequate sanitation. In addition, UNICEF continued to support the construction or rehabilitation of water, sanitation and hygiene facilities in 68 schools (29 in the West Bank and 39 in Gaza), benefiting 48,896 students (22,117 girls) with access to safe and adequate water and sanitation. UNICEF also supported water tanking to 151 schools in Gaza for February-June 2012, thereby providing safe drinking water to 70,000 students (37,237 girls), at 0.7-1 litre per day per student.

[40] The buffer zone is the zone inside Palestinian territory along the northern and eastern border of the Gaza Strip with Israel, to which Israel restricts access, citing security concerns.

C. Economic empowerment and livelihoods

28. Microfinance support continued to be a source of short-term poverty alleviation in the West Bank and in the Gaza Strip, with women representing a high number of beneficiaries. From September 2011 to July 2012, the UNRWA Microfinance Department provided 3,439 loans (34 per cent of total loans), amounting to $3.5 million, to Palestinian refugee and non-refugee women in the West Bank. In parallel, 171 individual loans, amounting to a total of $102,600, were provided to poor and vulnerable Palestinian refugee women through the relief and social services programme community managed fund. In the Gaza Strip, the UNRWA Microfinance Department disbursed 3,567 loans valued at $5.7 million. Women received 1,325 loans (37 per cent of the total) and $1.48 million (26 per cent) in business and non-business loans to enhance entrepreneurship and access to credit.

29. UNRWA has continued to provide relief to special hardship cases, including providing grants to 18 income-generating projects across 15 community-based organizations in the refugee camps in the West Bank. This contributed to the employment of 42 women, training of 339 women and volunteer opportunities for 77 women. In the Gaza Strip, the programme has provided grants to 10 income-generating projects established at women's programme centres and community-based rehabilitation centres, employing 86 women in microenterprises such as sewing, food, embroidery and hairdressing. In the West Bank, the UNRWA humanitarian job creation programme offered short-term employment opportunities to 10,560 Palestinian refugee women (42 per cent of total beneficiaries). The humanitarian job creation programme provided a monthly cash-for-work subsidy of $420 to female beneficiaries, and procured and distributed tools, materials and equipment to 30 women's centres.

30. Since the start of the United Nations Joint Programme on Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women three years ago, ILO and UNRWA have provided various forms of capacity-building and income-generating projects for women. ILO provided members of 43 women-only cooperatives with grants, training and technical assistance, and piloted a capacity-building programme focused on business management and marketing skills, targeting 300 Palestinian women microentrepreneurs across the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. ILO also assisted in the formation of the National Women's Economic Council, with the mandate to formulate and adopt a conceptual policy framework through which to reinforce the economic participation of women, end discrimination and inequality, provide support to the Ministry of Labour and influence national policies so as to increase opportunities for women.

31. FAO, WFP and UN-Women continued interventions to enhance women's economic empowerment and food security. FAO provided agriculture inputs and training on food processing, marketing and bookkeeping to women associations in rural areas, benefiting 2,000 women-headed households in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip in 2011. WFP provided assistance through food distribution and voucher programmes, which reached 245,101 women. Female-headed households in both the West Bank and the Gaza Strip were targeted, receiving, in most cases, complementary interventions including cash assistance. During the reporting period, UN-Women supported 32 women's centres running canteens that became financially independent and provided meals for 22,572 children. The programme generated

employment opportunities for 110 women, many of whom were working for the first time in their lives.

32. Through the Gaza gender initiative, UNRWA implemented the young women leaders programme aiming to close the skills gap between the labour market and the educated labour force, through ensuring that young women graduates develop skills required by the labour market. During the reporting period, the programme reached 723 female graduates. As part of the same initiative, UNRWA ran an empowerment programme for female-headed households, offering targeted skills-building related to financial literacy, household management and microbusiness. Three hundred female heads of household benefited from the programme.

D. Rule of law and violence against women

33. United Nations entities continued to implement a range of initiatives designed to improve women's access to justice and enhance capacity to prevent and respond to violence against women. The UNDP Rule of Law programme supported about 10 organizations that provide legal aid to women by representing them in cases involving family law and other matters such as labour rights, gender-based violence and family reunification before the sharia courts, in both the West Bank (including East Jerusalem) and the Gaza Strip. The programme supported 275 women with legal representation and provided legal advice to 1,519 women and psychosocial support services to 444 women. In addition, 5,710 women participated in legal awareness-raising workshops. Gender-related training was provided to 240 female lawyers and 110 female law students. In the Gaza Strip, 3,645 women received legal advice and psychosocial assistance through legal aid units and from psychosocial counsellors working in the women's programme centres supported by UNRWA. UN-Women supported the formation of a group of specialized lawyers, under the auspices of the Palestinian Bar Association, to provide legal aid and representation to women victims of violence. The development of a capacity development programme designed to train lawyers specializing in defending women victims of violence was supported as well. UN-Women also provided technical assistance to the Independent Commission for Human Rights in developing a database for monitoring women's access to justice.

34. UN-Women supported the Palestinian Civil Police in developing the first strategy and action plan, standard operating procedures, job descriptions and minimum standard guidelines for family protection units, as well as a capacity development programme for its staff. UN-Women also supported the development of a media campaign to inform the public of the Palestinian Authority's commitment to ending domestic violence and promoted strengthening of coordination between prosecutors and specialized police in dealing with cases of women victims of violence.

35. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, the United Nations Office for Project Services and UN-Women continued to implement initiatives in support of the strengthening of the management of the Palestinian penitentiary system and the rehabilitation of inmates in reform and rehabilitation centres administered by the Palestinian Authority. UN-Women supported the establishment and implementation of rehabilitation programmes for female inmates in these centres (with a monthly

range of 30 female inmates), providing them with legal aid and representation services.

36. During the reporting period, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime supported the implementation of a four-year project entitled "Forensic human resource and governance development assistance for the Palestinian Authority", which aims to ensure that sexual and family violence cases are investigated and prosecuted with the necessary sensitivity by law enforcement and the judiciary. It also aims to guarantee that there are sufficient numbers of knowledgeable, skilled and competent female specialist forensic physicians, doctors, nurses and forensic scientists for the anticipated enhanced capability in clinical forensic services as applied to crimes, sexual assault, child abuse and domestic violence.

37. A number of entities, including UN-Women, UNRWA, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and UNFPA, supported various activities aimed at raising awareness on violence against women. Advocacy and public education initiatives included festivals to combat violence against women in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, a public event organized by women victims of violence to enable them to speak about their experiences and training for different stakeholders. Between December 2011 and June 2012, UNRWA delivered basic and specialized training for staff, community-based organizations and community representatives on identification, intervention and referral in respect of gender-based violence cases, violence against women, family protection and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.[41] The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights continued to engage in awareness-raising activities regarding women's rights, and to work closely with women's rights organizations to strengthen their capacity in utilizing international human rights procedures.

38. United Nations entities continued to support the development and expansion of services targeted at women survivors of violence. UN-Women continued to support the Mehwar Centre, the first multi-service centre in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, which throughout the reporting period sheltered an average of 20 women on any given day and continued to provide a range of social and legal services, as well as to economically empower women and to reintegrate them in society. UN-Women, in collaboration with UNDP, also continued to support the Hayat multipurpose centre for the empowerment of women and families, in the Gaza Strip, at which 30 women benefited from psychological, social and legal services during the period. In the West Bank, UNRWA developed an internal referral mechanism for survivors of gender-based violence in nine refugee camps and is currently expanding the mechanism to an additional seven camps, one village and one city in the north of the West Bank. In the Gaza Strip, the gender-based violence referral system, established to provide coordinated responses to gender-based violence across its service programmes in the health, social services and mental health sectors, was further expanded to include 18 one-stop centres. During the reporting period, 651 cases of gender-based violence were detected and referred through the new system, with the majority of victims and survivors having been subjected to physical violence and emotional abuse perpetrated by their husband. A comprehensive and confidential gender-based violence information management system was also designed and launched. Building on initiatives reported in the last

[41] United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 1249, No. 20378.

reporting period, entities such as UN-Women, UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF, UNESCO and ILO continued to support Palestinian institutions in building capacity to prevent and respond to violence against women, including through the implementation of the National Strategy to Combat Violence against Women (2011-2019) and efforts to improve data collection and analysis in this area.

E. Power and decision-making

39. During 2012, UNDP supported the Palestinian Initiative for the Promotion of Global Dialogue and Democracy designed to enhance the capacities of 40 young Palestinian women leaders across the Occupied Palestinian Territory and strengthen their networks. As a result, 85 per cent of the trainees participated as observers in monitoring the local elections held in October 2012. In addition, four participants ran for elections in the list of their political party. UN-Women, in partnership with the Women's Affairs Technical Committee, provided training and awareness-raising on women's political participation and leadership to over 1,300 women and men, including local council members and youth. Through this programme, two local councils revised their strategies and workplans to ensure that gender was mainstreamed and the reactivation of the national committee for women's political participation was achieved. The Women's Affairs Technical Committee reported that over 20 women had submitted applications for membership in the General Union of Palestinian Women.

F. Institutional development

40. As part of the Joint Programme on Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women, UNDP advanced gender awareness and expertise among civil servants working at the local governance units and at different community levels, undertaking capacity development interventions in partnership with Birzeit University. Some 370 public servants (38 per cent of them women) were equipped with the knowledge and tools needed to integrate gender in district development planning and gender-sensitive budgeting.

41. UNDP and UN-Women signed an agreement with the Ministry of Women's Affairs to establish a monitoring and evaluation unit and to conduct a capacity-building development plan for its staff. This unit complements other existing monitoring and evaluation units at the Ministry of Planning, the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics and other line institutions in respect of monitoring gender equality and the implementation of the National Strategy to Combat Violence against Women and the Cross-Sectoral National Gender Strategy.

42. UNDP seconded a gender expert to the Ministry of Justice, who assisted the Ministry in establishing a gender justice unit. The gender expert worked with the Ministry to develop a gender action plan based on relevant national strategies. The strengthening of this gender unit is currently being supported by the United Nations Office for Project Services at the technical and operational levels through the Sharaka project.

43. During the reporting period, a number of ministries made progress in mainstreaming gender in their policies, programmes and strategies. The Ministry of Agriculture amended its recruitment policy to ensure that 25 per cent of all newly

recruited staff at middle and senior management levels are women. The Ministry of Culture mainstreamed gender into the culture sector strategy and documented promising practices for integrating gender into achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. The Ministry of Education adopted the school canteens scheme as a national business model for women. The Ministry of the Interior/Palestinian civil police reform and rehabilitation centres recognized the right of women inmates to work during detention and approved economic empowerment opportunities for women inmates. In addition, the Ministry of Social Affairs oversaw the Mehwar Centre and increased the quality and number of employment opportunities for women living in the shelter.

44. ILO supported the Palestinian Authority in establishing a national minimum wage to protect low-wage workers and help marginalized and vulnerable groups, provided technical assistance with respect to the review of labour and employment-related legislation, and undertook a gender legal review in collaboration with the National Women's Employment Committee. A range of amendments, primarily to the labour law of 2000, were proposed based on the review. ILO also provided technical assistance in the development of an integrated social security system, and continued to provide training and technical assistance on the conduct of gender audits to ministries and other institutions.

45. UNFPA assisted the Ministry of Health in developing a national programme for family planning services and the national reproductive health strategy for the years 2013-2016. UNFPA also assisted in the development of curricula focusing on gender-based violence-related issues, and conducted capacity-building initiatives focused on religious and community leaders. UNFPA supported the Ministry of Social Affairs in producing a life skills curriculum for the use of counsellors dealing with marginalized young girls and boys. WHO conducted training workshops for Ministry of Health staff to develop capacity to undertake analysis and address the differential impact of health policies on women and men.

46. UNESCO continued to support the Palestinian Women's Research and Documentation Centre in advancing gender equality and women's empowerment through capacity-building, research, advocacy and documentation activities. The UNESCO capacity development programme helped various community-based and non-governmental and governmental organizations to run programmes, conduct research and analyse policies from a gender perspective, and communicate effectively in respect of the issues affecting the situation and status of Palestinian women. UNESCO also implemented a coaching programme for gender units in line ministries.

47. As in the previous reporting period, a number of initiatives were also undertaken to enhance gender mainstreaming within the United Nations system. UN-Women recently completed a gender review of the medium-term response plan 2011-2013[42] with the purpose of setting clear outcomes, outputs and indicators which would contribute to and measure progress in terms of gender equality. UN-Women also undertook pilot gender mainstreaming efforts with UNRWA and FAO. UN-Women engaged with FAO, in a full assessment of their operations and programmes, whose recommendations are now being applied by the FAO office. The

[42] The medium-term response plan of the United Nations country team is a strategic planning tool aimed at structuring the joint work of the United Nations organizations operating in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs continued to implement a budget gender marker and directed efforts in particular towards integrating sex-disaggregated data and analysis in the 2012 consolidated appeals process.

IV. Conclusions and recommendations

48. **The continued lack of progress in the peace process, growing tensions and an escalation in violence and related displacement during the reporting period are of great concern. Restrictive residency, planning and zoning, and movement policies, together with continued settlement expansion, and the closure of the Gaza Strip have created a challenging humanitarian situation impacting negatively on the lives of many Palestinian women and their families. While there has been progress on some development indicators, the volatility of the context renders progress fragile and prone to regression. High levels of unemployment, poverty and insecurity persist and many Palestinian women and girls still face significant obstacles in accessing basic services such as education, health, water and sanitation. Insecurity and poverty can exacerbate gender-based discrimination and abuse, and this has been experienced by Palestinian women in the form of elevated levels of violence in the public and private spheres, as well as discrimination in the workplace.**

49. **Operating in a volatile and complex environment, United Nations organizations continued to respond to such challenges and carried out extensive activities to address the needs of women and girls. There were notable achievements in policy and institutional development during 2011 and 2012. Initial steps to implement the Cross-Sectoral National Gender Strategy for 2011-2013 and the National Strategy to Combat Violence against Women (2011-2019) have been encouraging. The effective implementation of these strategies, however, requires sustained political commitment, technical support and financial resources. Over the reporting period, the Palestinian Authority continued to take steps to address violence against women, including through strengthening police family protection units, taking more institutional ownership of shelters, and announcing the formation of a committee to study personal status laws to protect women. It is critical to build on, support and expand such initiatives.**

50. **The United Nations Joint Programme on Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women and the Joint Programme on Culture and Development provided the opportunity for United Nations organizations and national and local partners to work in partnership and enhance national ownership mechanisms. It is highly recommended that the United Nations system build on the achievements of these Programmes and work towards the continued implementation of joint programmes in partnership with national and local partners.**

51. **Improving the situation of Palestinian women remains inextricably linked to efforts to achieve lasting peace and women's ability to participate in decision-making processes related to peace and security. Efforts to involve both Palestinian and Israeli women in a revitalized peace process need to be enhanced and supported in accordance with the spirit of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000). Mechanisms for enhancing accountability and**

monitoring progress in the implementation of that resolution and related commitments on women and peace and security should be established.

52. **In view of recent political changes in the region and Arab women's growing participation in political life and decision-making processes, it is important to continue to promote and support the right of Palestinian women to effective political participation and leadership. Special attention should be given to on-the-job coaching for women newly elected to office. Support for women at the various stages of electoral processes should be provided and strategic partnerships with significant stakeholders — political parties, the media, State institutions and the civil society — should be further developed.**

53. **It is critical to continue to collect and analyse sex- and age-disaggregated data on a range of issues impacting the lives of Palestinians and to ensure that this information is incorporated systematically in reports and briefings by the United Nations system to relevant intergovernmental bodies.**